CHAPTER XXVI

FRANCE AND ENGLAND IN ARMS l

A Debatable Question — The Attack on English Commerce—* Bonaparte Abandons his Colonial System — The Neighbors of France —The Feint against England —The Army at Boulogne — England Aroused — Enthusiasm in France.

THE much debated question as to whether or not Bonaparte was victor in the diplomatic struggle, desired the rupture as it occurred and wanted war, is, in the light of the fullest information, apparently unanswerable. If he were a profound philosopher and constructive statesman disposed to abandon the struggle for mastery on the high seas and confine the expansion of France to the Continent, he was ready and his wishes were fulfilled; if, on the other hand, he intended to confront England by sea and her allies by land, he was unready, for he had no fighting navy and he had not expected war so soon. There were the beginnings of colonial empire in Australia, Decaen was on his way to Reunion with a squadron to establish a base of action against British India, the Cape of Good Hope was French, there was every prospect of a powerful Mah-ratta-French alliance in India itself. There were high hopes in the Ionian Isles, in Greece, and for Egypt. Malta might be wrested from England, and so forth.

1 In addition to the authorities already given, see Rose's Napoleon and Phiiippon Power and Life of Nelson; Pellew's Life of Lord Sidmouth; and the Memoirs of the Earl of St. Vincent. 1901; Bourgeois, Manuel de Politique Etrangfcre; Castlereagh's Letters and Despatches; Mahan's Sea and Napoleonic studies; in the Revue Historique for March,